

# KGB Thuggery

Peter Reddaway

The Soviet security police, or KGB, have launched a new drive to suppress the *samizdat* journal *The Chronicle of Current Events*. This was confirmed when they conducted a seven-hour search at the end of January in the Moscow flat of Mrs. Tatiana Khodorovich, a linguist and long-standing dissenter, and confiscated a large quantity of material. The *Chronicle* has been appearing since 1968 and has given detailed coverage to the activities of many dissenting groups and their persecution by the KGB. The 32nd issue was 125 pages long.\*

Issue No. 33 was circulated in Moscow in December. The Russian text, which arrived in New York at the end of January, is largely devoted to information on five prison camps in the USSR, and contains lists of political prisoners held in the camps and detailed accounts of their treatment as well as statements by some of the prisoners themselves. It will be issued in the United States by the Khronika Press. The police want to find out who prepared and edited it.

Formally, the search of Mrs. Khodorovich's flat was in connection with "Case No. 345," a large-scale KGB operation in Lithuania which began in 1973 and has involved several hundred house-searches and interrogations and a growing number of arrests. Its main aim is to suppress the *samizdat* journal *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, of which eleven issues have appeared in three years.

A recent wave of searches of Moscow flats and the arrest of Dr. \*Amnesty International will be publishing issues 28-31 in book form in London in the near future.

Sergei Kovalyov, an eminent biologist, were also formally linked with the Lithuanian case. But Dr. Kovalyov's friend Dr. Andrei Sakharov, in an appeal to Amnesty International and the world's biologists, dismissed this link as a pretext.

The KGB does, however, have grounds for suspecting a link between Dr. Kovalyov and Mrs. Khodorovich and the *Chronicle of Current Events*. Last May they and a third colleague handed copies of the *Chronicle* openly to Western journalists, together with a statement that they regarded it as a legal publication. They wanted the widest possible circulation for it, they wrote, since they believed that the "truthful information" it contained should be made available to everyone interested.

Another current KGB target in Moscow appears to be the Amnesty International group which was established there last year. Dr. Kovalyov is a member of this group, and its secretary, Mr. Andrei Tverdokhlebov, has had large quantities of literature removed from his flat by the KGB twice in recent weeks.

Amnesty International in London has protested these searches and Dr. Kovalyov's arrest several times. Steps are also being taken to raise Dr. Kovalyov's case at the 12th International Congress of Botanists, due to take place in Leningrad this July.

A third KGB target is Dr. Sakharov. Ominous threats to kill members of his family, he reports, have clearly been inspired by the KGB, as were similar threats in 1973 during the long campaign of vilification of him in the Soviet press. And for the last six weeks his phone calls from many countries abroad have been systematically disconnected. He feels more vulnerable now than in 1973.

In response, a group of eighty-eight Nobel Prize winners who successfully protested against his persecution in 1973 have begun to organize a new campaign in his defense, and the future of Soviet-American scientific cooperation has again begun to be questioned.

A vivid picture of Dr. Sakharov's present situation emerges from his open letter of January 6 to Mr. Andropov, the head of the KGB, which has just reached the West. The full text is as follows:

"On December 20 I received a letter from a mythical Russian Christian Party, which contained threats directed at my son-in-law Efrem Yankelevich and my one-year-old grandson. The authors of the letter threaten to destroy them if I continue my civic activity. The content and whole tone of this letter make it obvious that it was composed by your officials with the aim of frightening me and forcing me to keep quiet. I suppose that my silence would be particularly desirable just now, given the present situation at home and abroad.

"The previous day I had received notification from the visa office that Yankelevich and his wife had been refused permission for a journey to the USA at the invitation of the President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Prior to this, their application had lain unanswered for a year and eight months. This coincidence cannot be accidental. I declare that the members of my family are hostages and are being used as a means of exerting pressure on me.

"This has been confirmed again today. Two of your officials, who were tailing my son-in-law on the street, repeated word for word the same threats as before (adding some foul language), and demanded an end to my activity. They said:

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'How many warnings do we have to give?' And then they made the threat more explicit: 'We'll deal with you and your son, you bastard. You'll be lying dead on that rubbish-heap.'

"A year ago I heard similar threats to my family from your officials operating in the guise of Palestinians. Simultaneously my wife heard threats from Investigator Syshchikov, who was dressed in the uniform of your department. Palestinian Arabs, a KGB investigator, fake Christians, street hooligans—the wheel has come full circle.

"I demand an end to the harassment of me. I demand an end to the thuggery, and assurances of security for my family. Don't disgrace your department even more by threatening the lives of children in the way practiced in Stalin's time. In the present circumstances, for which your department bears the responsibility, I demand that permission be granted at once to Efrem Yankelevich, his wife Tanya Semyonova, and their son to travel to the USA for an unlimited period, but on Soviet passports so that they will have the right to return home when their security can once again be assured.

"It is quite clear that they are hostages. The only way of ending this form of pressure on me is to give them visas at once. I also demand immediate permission for my wife to travel to Italy for treatment (for her blindness). I demand an end to the disconnecting of my international phone-calls. I demand an end to the judicial and extra-judicial persecution of my friends, including Sergei Kovalyov, who was arrested on December 27.

"At the same time as sending you this letter I am making it generally available and appealing to the world public for its support and defense."

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